

JUNE 20, 1978

CROATIAN EDUCATION REFORMS

ANNCR:

THE YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF CROATIA IS REFORMING ITS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF THE STATE. THE EDUCATION REFORM IS EXPECTED TO SPREAD TO THE OTHER PARTS OF YUGOSLAVIA, EVEN THOUGH IT IS THE SUBJECT OF A FIERCE CONTROVERSY IN CROATIA. RON PEMSTEIN TELLS US MORE ABOUT THE REFORM AND THE CONTROVERSY IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

IT'S A CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN DISGUISE, COMPLAINED ONE PROFESSOR...IT'S A COUP D ETAT AGAINST THE INTELLIGENTSIA, SAYS ANOTHER. THE SUBJECT OF THEIR SCORN IS CROATIA'S EDUCATIONAL REFORM.

PROPOSERS OF THE PLAN SAY IT WILL RELIEVE OVERCROWDING OF CERTAIN UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS...IT WILL TRAIN STUDENTS FOR USEFUL OCCUPATIONS AND EVERYONE WILL BE GIVEN AN EQUAL CHANCE FOR A GENERAL EDUCATION. UNDER YUGOSLAVIA'S FEDERAL SYSTEM, INDIVIDUAL REPUBLICS CAN DRAW UP THEIR OWN REGULATIONS INDEPENDENTLY OF BELGRADE. CROATIA, THE SECOND LARGEST REPUBLIC HAS TAKEN THE LEAD IN EDUCATION.

THE REPUBLICAN MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, STIPE SHUVAR, HAS BECOME THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE IN CROATIA FOR HIS PLAN TO EMPHASIZE NATURAL SCIENTIST, TECHNICAL STUDIES AND LIMIT THE OPPORTUNITIES TO STUDY SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES. "WE HAD A TYPICAL UNDEVELOPED SYSTEM," SAYS ASSISTANT CROATIAN EDUCATION MINISTER NARCISA CEMALOVIC. "WE HAD SEVEN ECONOMIC FACULTIES AND FOUR LAW FACULTIES, WE HAD TOO, MANY

PROFESSIONAL GEOGRAPHERS," HE SAID, "WHERE COULD THEY FIND WORK, BUT WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH ENGINEERS OR MACHINIST.

UNDER THE REFORM, PLACES AT THE UNIVERSITIES HAVE BEEN LIMITED. INSTEAD OF FIVE ECONOMIC FACULTIES AT ZAGREB UNIVERSITY THERE IS NOW ONE. INSTEAD OF TEACHING GEOGRAPHY AT ALL FOUR UNIVERSITIES IN CROATIA, THE REPUBLIC IS LIMITING GEOGRAPHY TO ONE INSTITUTION. PROFESSOR RUDOLF FILIPOVIC, WHO HELPED DRAW UP THE PLAN, SAYS THE NUMBER OF PLACES FOR STUDENTS IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT ZAGREB UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN CUT FROM TWO HUNDRED FIFTY A YEAR TO JUST FIFTY. BUT HE INSISTS THIS WILL ADEQUATELY FILL CROATIA'S NEEDS FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS AND INTERPRETERS. "WE CANNOT GIVE THEM ALL JOBS," HE SAID, "WHY DOES SOMEONE AT THE INFORMATION DESK AT ZAGREB AIRPORT HAVE TO BE TRAINED IN LINGUISTICS?"

OTHER PROFESSORS DIFFER. THEY OBJECT TO THE PLAN'S EMPHASIS ON MAKING STUDENTS CHOOSE A PROFESSION WHILE THEY ARE STILL IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS. THEY FEEL THE LIMITED NUMBER OF UNIVERSITY PLACES WILL PENALIZE TALENTED STUDENTS WHO WANT TO MAJOR IN PHILOSOPHY OR LITERATURE. SOME CROATIAN STUDENTS ARE NOW GOING TO VIENNA TO STUDY SUBJECTS THAT ARE CLOSED TO THEM HERE.

BUT THE CRITICS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEY HAVE LOST THEIR FIGHT AND THAT THE SYSTEM IS LIKELY TO BE IMITATED IN OTHER YUGOSLAV REPUBLICS. THE DEFENDERS OF THE SYSTEM INSIST THAT THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF DIRECTING STUDENTS TO A PROFESSION IS CORRECT AND THAT A STUDENT MUST BE EDUCATED TO MEET THE COUNTRY'S NEEDS.

JS/RCS